

ABSTRACT: This essay makes the case that 1. Definitions of categories which are all-inclusive cease to be analytically useful and 2. People, especially personalistic national leaders, may be special cases of individuals which function as institutions, even occasionally after they cease to embody power in their corporeal form (i.e. reform, retire, or die). It first suggests the dichotomy between structure and agency should be a more fluid duality, considers institutional definitions, probes the possibility of individual people in institutional/structural roles, examines the notion of personalism and its relationship to more generally accepted state structures, offers concrete examples of leaders who have and have not become state and national institutions. While individual leaders needn't be studied in the same way as institutions, their importance to political analysis, and the politics of which they are an essential and all but eternal part, extends well beyond their status as mortal human agents.

Individual People as Political Institutions

Definitions, Structure and Agency. For a term to function as a viable unit of or approach to political analysis, definitional clarity, if universality, is essential. An ideally clear definition of a central term must state, or at very least, imply what it “means”, what it “includes”, and what it does not include. While unanimity may be an unattainable goal in political science, definitions of the central term “institution” are particularly contentious and varied, contextualized, even personalized, and usually silent on the third definitional dimension of categorical exclusion.¹ Rather than attempting to align everything scholars have included in its definition, this study proposes to clarify the concept by examining what should, by the general dichotomy of structure and agency, be categorically excluded: individual people. Evidence will show that some state leaders become state and national institutions both while in power and after giving it up or dying (events which often coincide), but most who are not “founders”, despite leaders’ and their followers’ best efforts, are eventually displaced, disassociated, or disowned as painful reminders of a despotic past.²

While countless others have noted that institutions do not dwell solely in the structural realm, often taking on agendas and autonomous power of their own³, the study of agents becoming structure is far sparser, presumably due to its greater rarity, difficulty, or even a firmly definitional impossibility. Examples of groups of people which function as institutions (whether organizations or “sets of norms and rules”) abound, from masses to elites, peasantries to proletariats to bourgeoisies, populism to the exalted principles and persons of “founding fathers”. When an individual, almost always a national leader, takes on a structural role, however, the result is often seen as a “weakening” of institutions rather than acknowledgement that the leader, personalism, personality cults, patrimonial leadership, or “the strong man” are institutions in and of themselves.

A few examples from recent literature are required to illustrate the ambiguity of whether individual people can ever be institutions. While some definitions are more exclusive of people than others, the frequency with which individuals transcend their

¹ In the “hard sciences”, terms tend not only to be more objective and observable, but also more mutually exclusive. A particle cannot be both a proton and an electron, but even light (photons) is referred to as a “wave-particle duality” exhibiting properties of both types. Similarly, in linguistics apparently firm parts of speech often morph unexpectedly, as when long-revered nouns such as “friend” take action. Structure and agency are complementary categories, but placing them in mutually exclusive opposition elides a complex reality. The one-sided study of their overlap needs scrutiny.

² As this is written for a class in macropolitics, the qualifying antecedent/referent which will qualify a person as an institution is a nation, nation-state, or “higher” (i.e. regional/international/global). By this, we mean that every case must be an institution *of* something larger than itself.

³Max Weber’s ideal institution of a fully rational and impersonal public bureaucracy is most notably problematized by Weber himself! Peters’ book notes Weber’s acceptance of its unattainability in several sections.

corporeal agency demands that they be acknowledged as residing far more consequentially in the realm of institutions. Throughout what follows, it will be worthwhile to keep in mind why variable definitions in the “new institutionalist” approach make it both powerful and problematic. Whether it would remain useful if agents are allowed as institutions is this essay’s underlying point contention. Before contending that some agents have this transcendental power, conventional agency needs attention.



ABOVE: Model of the concept of agency⁴

In the model of the concept of agency, given above, there is clearly some overlap with characteristics ascribed to institutions. Deliberative institutions such as the U.S. Supreme Court, WTO, and UN are fundamentally imbued with “powers of interpretation”. Each also has power of its own, and in the lower right, decision-making procedures are more closely associated with institutional structures than agency. If the model’s creator intended to suggest that agents’ autonomy in making choices is inevitably constrained by structural factors, as is the commonly accepted effect, this essay will suggest that it should remain in an agency model for the special cases when personalistic leaders adjust these procedures on an ad-hoc basis and thereby function as institutional structures.⁵ Quickly and fundamentally, one mutually exclusive dichotomy is thusly compromised, but there are more.

An extended excerpt from Wes Sharrock and Graham Button helpfully articulates many of the larger issues this essay will address:

[T]he recurrent contrast between “institutions” and “individuals” seems to provide a basis for the alleged difficulty [of structuralists]: if “institutions” are distinct from “individuals”, then those who study individuals must, by definition, fail to access the reality of institutions. The distinction is often formulated as one between “macro” and “micro” sociologies, with the latter being condemned for failing to understand that the whole is greater than the parts and for missing the larger picture represented by temporally and spacially extended action. The second alleged deficiency is that *even if you grant* to “micro” or “interpretive” sociologies the reasonableness of studying “individual actions” then they are nonetheless incapable of recognizing that individuals are not all equal in their powers, and that some of them can be more influential over the social whole than the others.⁶

We will return to the possibility of more or less influential individuals, but first, a more schematic summary of *Human Agents and Social Structures’* opening chapters follows, stripping the dichotomies they address to their barest elements.

⁴ Figure 2.3b from Friedman and Starr, pg. 32. This model is said to have two “levels” below the concept it explains. Their model of the relationship between structure and agency is much more complex, resembling an alien spacecraft from a 1950’s science fiction movie or 1980’s video game, and won’t be examined here.

⁵ Note that this is not to say that such leaders simply *create* new institutions which are self-serving; many find it more expedient for personal discretion itself to serve as the relevant deliberative institution, subordinating all other conventional institutions delineated in the polity’s constitution. Nor is this to say that personalistic leaders literally decide *everything* themselves—truly impossible at national and even much lower levels of analysis. Rather, once the leader’s relevant personal preferences have been established, in the form of written or unwritten laws, actors at lower levels may routinely subject their own decisions to the leader’s all-pervasive judgement. The behavior of hierarchically lower actors is thereby structured and constrained, in contemporary Christian terms, by a WWJD?-question.

⁶ Their chapter is in Martin & Dennis, excerpted from pg. 28. Emphasis in original. The reader is kindly asked to replace “social”, “sociologies”, and “sociologist” with their political cognates for this passage.

Macro-	Micro-		Macro-	Meso-	Micro-
Objective	Subjective		Objective	Intersubjectivity w/in a bounded group or territory	Subjective
Structure	Agency		Structure	Structures with power, interests, "actor" status under some conditions	Agency
Institution	Individual		Institution	Individuals as state & national institutions (deliberating for state/nation OR symbols)	Individual

ABOVE: At left, analytical dichotomies of the social sciences deemed conventional and problematic by Martin & Dennis. Those in the either column tend to be treated, often together in isolation (or accused isolation) from their complements. At right, relevant attempts either to bridge or subvert them. This essay focuses on the supposedly wide divide between institutions and individuals.

Beyond structure and agency, another main definitional objection to an individual's institutional eligibility is that which requires an institution to be a *predictable* (i.e. not arbitrary) guide to political outcomes.⁸ The counterargument is that deliberative institutions such as democracy are intentionally designed to introduce unpredictability into leadership succession—the primary reason authoritarians don't want "free and fair" elections. What is predictable in both cases, however, is that citizens and outside observers can predict where and how political outcomes occur or originate. A person is the most national institution, then, when it is clear that s/he is making decisions which override, contradict, or act in the place of nonexistent other institutions. Every governing leader is a national political institution to the extent that his or her position (or personal charisma to supersede the legal limitations of the position) endows him or her to use personal discretion to shape or create political outcomes.⁹ Power and autonomy themselves denote agency; personal discretion, by contrast, is akin to the institutionalized, deliberative and rule-based processes of more widely accepted institutions such as NAFTA (a set of rules), the WTO (an organization which uses rules to promote trade and settle disputes) or the UN (a deliberative body which attempts to create and implement international law). That the decisive leader's deliberation occurs within one or a few brains does not disqualify it from institutional status; it is merely a perfectly personal institutional body.

Drawing generally from the post-WWII and contemporary leadership pool of East Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, this study will assess the success and failure of individual leaders to leave an indelible mark on their nations, which were they not individual mortal men would indisputably be labeled institutions. The concept of personalism must also be differentiated from normatively charged despotism by showing lasting effects on the state and nation which are willingly, even proudly retained after the leader's death. Some authoritarian leaders are, after all, nothing more than powerful dictators; others take Louis the XIV's assertion that "l'etat c'est moi" to the highest practical extremes, with the audacity to demand gratitude and, later, nostalgia. Above

⁷ See their introductory chapter and also "The Structure Problem in the Context of Structure and Agency Controversies" by Sharrock and Button in the second chapter.

⁸ See Peters' definition of institutions, pg. 18.

⁹ A state whose highest leader, due to heavy and well-respected institutional constraints, has very little personal discretion. Japan's notoriously weak Prime Ministers thus have almost no chance of becoming national institutions. Even a relatively strong, personalist leader such as Junichiro Koizumi had his reforms gradually overturned, and he is remembered more as a strong leader than as an institution (, IMO). While ruling, however, he may have been as close to a powerful, personalist dictator as the country had seen for some time (or since). In other words, Koizumi's institutionally-derived power (agency) mostly came from being Japan's Prime Minister. However, at least a little also came from his being Koizumi (and all that individualized quasi-institution embodied, such as his charisma and popularity with Japanese citizens, personally derived or preferred ideas for how to reform the country). A comparison with the relatively powerless, but undeniably institutionalized individual Japanese emperor may also be fruitful, in another paper.

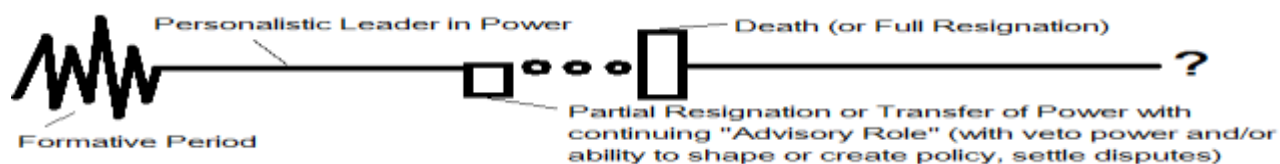
all, it will be shown that the phenomenon of personalistic “self-institutionalization” is not a relic of the past but is in fact quite prevalent in modernity and the contemporary world.

When Are People Institutions? To exclude people entirely from categorization as institutions would have a drastically deleterious effect on the richness of political analysis. A small sample of terms which are at once undeniably people and institutions is below. The first column, “Groups of People”, is only included to show that some kinds of people are already quite conventionally institutionalized as standard units of analysis—while requiring some degree of reification—while matters get controversial when the number of people is reduced to one (who more often than not has actually existed and would self-identify as the institution or title in question).

	Group of People	"Commoner"	Leader	-isms
	classes	The Average Man	despot/personalist leader	despotism
GENERAL	elites/masses	Man on the Street	The Strong Man/caudillo	populism
	founding fathers	The Median Voter	state/national founder	personalism
	oligarchs	The Model Citizen	charismatic leader (Weber)	elitism
			traditional leader (Weber)	patrimonialism
SPECIFIC	Ayatollahs	"Joe Sixpack"	personality cult	
	"Old Revolutionaries" (China)	Lei Feng (China)		
	Princelings (China)	Horatio Alger	Japanese Emperor	"Person's Name"-ism
	British & Spanish monarchies		The Queen (UK)	

ABOVE: General and specific examples of people who are analytically treated as institutional categories and units.

The non-trivial matter of mortality makes it especially difficult for individuals to become institutions generally, and outside of political propaganda and scholarly analysis, few but state leaders are able to achieve such status in reference to the nation-state. For strict dichotomists and others who reject that a living individual can be a state institution, a simple test can be applied to determine whether a person has become one after death.¹⁰



ABOVE: Timeline of the individual leader as a state institution. The chaotic “Formative Period” most accurately precedes the coming to power of a supposedly unifying/stabilizing national “strong man”.

Japan’s Supreme Advisors¹¹, and perhaps Vladimir Putin, could serve as the model for the middle portion of the timeline. It may entail the creation of an honorary position designed specifically for the retiring leader, who would serve until death as a kind of elderly institutional check on policies deemed inappropriate. The most personalistic leaders, however, rarely accept such a

¹⁰ One who clings to a strict dichotomy between structure and agency might insist that while a person is alive (and probably also in power), s/he is in possession of real agency, and thereby the most s/he could do is *function* as an institution. The only test that would matter would be death, after which s/he could be a real institution precisely for being bereft of agency.

¹¹ Described in Hayes, pg. 101, as a mainly reactive, non-initiative “sounding board” for former prime ministers and other elder leaders to be consulted, their approval could “confer” institutional legitimacy on controversial decisions. Apparently, when individually weak former leaders combine their powers, they can each become national quasi-institutions in the interim between resignation of ruling power and death.

demotion, and whether a formal institutional position is reserved or not, virtually no retired leaders cease to articulate their views of the national interest regardless of how much or little power they continue to wield. The concept of personalism and its relationship to institutions is now overdue for extended examination.

Personalism: An Ideology of the Individual Leader as THE Institution. What causes or defines a personalistic leader may not even be an empirical question.¹² Based on the previous section's "timeline", however, several empirical tests beyond simple longevity can be proposed to assess whether a personalist leader is in fact a state institution. Most controversially, perhaps, while the leader is in power it may be asked whether his discretion and will triumph over previously existing national institutions, especially as outlined in the state constitution.¹³ Generally, does the leader transcend the legally stipulated constraints of his position? Term limits and transfers of power would be key institutions to observe in this regard.

What, if anything, differentiates a personalist leader from a despot? Carlton's closing section notes that the line between a totalitarian autocrat and a despot is "very fine", centered on the "arbitrary nature" of the latter's rule.¹⁴ The term "personalism" is comparatively free of the negative normativity¹⁵, and thereby limited applicability, of the more widely used terms "despotism" and "dictatorship". Both of these latter terms are becoming marginalized, perhaps antiquated, in the field of political science not only for their normativeness, but also because the contemporary world is full of mixed cases in which style of leadership—and the roles/respect of legally stipulated national institutions—does not align neatly with regime type. A determined (and well-funded) leader, even in developed democratic countries, can often change restrictive institutions, such as term limits, to suit highly personal goals. The abundance of democratically elected, yet highly personalist leaders in a variety of contexts (both geographic and economic) strongly suggests that all leaders, and thereby the more commonly analyzed "institutional strength", could be placed on a personalist spectrum and will vary according to how much power and discretion are vested in the leader himself at any given time.

¹² Can a rigorous empirical assessment ever conclude that an entire state was governed on the whims of a single person? Less absolutely, can the creation of national institutions and policies ever be traced directly/objectively to fiat? To be consistent with my own definitional requirements, Weber's ideal type of a rational bureaucratic leader whose commitment to upholding institutions would make the individuals holding leadership positions virtually interchangeable would be categorically excluded from being "personalist". This concept, unlike "institution", has a natural antithesis approached by real world examples whose exclusion is logically implied. "Individual" may be the closest concept to an institutional antithesis, but it should be clear if this essay has any merit that the opposition is not nearly as natural or clear.

¹³ Though often called "institutions" of the U.S. Congress, long-serving senators and representatives would likely be disqualified by this requirement, as their membership in the one of the premier legal institutions makes so-called transcendence an immediately censurable (or impeachable) offense. Additionally, while they may appear to be institutions, their individual persons are in no way essential to the functioning of Congress. Each contributes something but is also replaceable. Invoking their names may have institutional meaning among sub-national groups, but they are ultimately too constrained, perhaps too little-known outside their constituencies, to be called national institutions. I'd gladly concede the opposite to a persuasive, actual Americanist.

¹⁴ Carlton, pg. 246, closes his book by noting that "the autocrat" is dependent upon a "special kind of polity which involves the systematic control of all social life in the interests of the state". Despotism contrasts in that there are not only "no effective limitations" to the leader's rule, but also none on his *will*. This note, which I equate with the earlier discretion of the personalist, "often results in cruelties and injustices". George W. Bush's unfelicitous self-entitlement as "the decider" came uncomfortably close to these concepts being relevant to a democratic leader, either a heinous or shrewd interpretation of the U.S. presidential institution.

¹⁵ Ambrose notes that the despot was once looked upon more positively, as when awe of such power resulted in open admiration.

A personalist leader, thus, does not result simply from a non-democratic regime and may or may not wield the absolute power of a despot. He is also even more likely than a despot to use the combination of his charisma (likely greater than a despot's) and leadership position to prioritize issues of personal discretion, almost always including opportunistic pursuit of self-enrichment and patrimonial cronyism, but potentially extending all the way to genocide. A personalistic leader, to a greater extent than a despot, cares about projecting a benevolent or even divinely omniscient image to the nation, as this is essential to his continued status as a supposedly beloved, national institution after his death. He cultivates not only a personality cult, but also what he hopes will be an institutional legacy to insure that subsequent national leaders, whose majesty will inevitably pale in comparison, stay on an appropriate trajectory which does not abruptly disown him or allow his family and cronies to fall out of favor. Lest this abstraction give way to editorializing over theory, historical examples are in order.

Six Examples of Attempted "Self-Institutionalization". Successes may be found in the PRC and DPRK, whose founding fathers retain posthumous leadership titles in the government even as their more generalizable ideologies fade from relevance. In the category of failures, the personalistic regimes of Francisco Franco (whose "franquismo" is virtually never translated out of Spanish) and Saddam Hussein will be offered. Finally, the ongoing personalist projects of Hugo Chavez to build a "Bolivarian Revolution" of his own design, and the exceptionally personalist and now embattled Muammar Qaddafi's Libya will be considered as examples of "structural individuals" showing the continued relevance of this topic. As space permits very little background information, each will be analyzed only briefly in regard to whether they qualified as state institutions while governing and after giving up power. A highly simplified summary chart follows.

Leader	A State/National Institution?	-ism?	# of statues	Birthday Holiday?	On Nat'l Currency?	On Flag?	In Constitution?	Founder?	Regime Type
Mao Zedong	Yes	毛泽东思想	>10	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Communist
Kim Il Sung/Jong Il	Yes	Juche	>500	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Communist
Francisco Franco	No (Formerly)	Franquismo	(all gone)	No	Formerly	No	No	No	Fascist/Authoritarian
Saddam Hussein	No (Formerly)	Saddamism?	(all gone)	No	Formerly	Formerly	?	No	Authoritarian
Muammar Qaddafi	Doubtful	Green Book	?	No	Yes	No	No	No	Authoritarian
Hugo Chávez	Probable	Chavismo?	0	No	No	No	No	No	Democratic
Ronald Reagan	Partisan/Sub-national	Reaganomics	1 (in Capitol)	No	Not Yet	No	No	No	Democratic
Others:	S. Berlusconi	R. Mugabe	V. Putin		S. Niyazov (Turkmenistan)	A. Saleh	J. Nehru & M. Gandhi		Lee Kuan Yew

ABOVE: "Successful" and "unsuccessful" attempts at self-institutionalization by mostly personalistic state and national leaders.

Viability of the personalist explanation of individual institutionalization relies heavily on the existence, especially in pragmatic authoritarian states, of leaders who are, as in the modern ideal, heavily constrained by law and other directed protocols

¹⁶ See also: Wikipedia's "list of longest ruling non-royal leaders", www.toppled Saddam.org/toppled.html (an entire book on the fate of Saddam Hussein statues)

outlined by more obvious institutional structures. In this regard, the history of the PRC can be read as a story of developing authoritarian institutionalism, specifically the bureaucratic form described by Hinnebusch. From the highly personalistic Mao to the highly constrained Hu (described by some as China's weakest leader since Mao's easily deposed successor, Hua Guofeng), the extent of institutionalization in the contemporary PRC is highly problematic for monolithic equations of authoritarianism with dictatorship. Furthermore, and related to my previous point on the superiority of personalism as an analytical lens, Deng Xiaoping was also extremely personalist and pragmatic—even anti-institutional—in reforming Post-Mao China into the categorical enigma it is today, yet his widely revered status for setting the country on the path to economic growth makes the labels of despot or dictator much less comfortable, if not wholly inappropriate¹⁷. With an aptness for colorful metaphors to explain the many “grey areas” of transitional PRC ideology and governance, the one “feeling the stones to cross the river” was usually the rugged individual Deng himself. As Feigon suggests, both Mao and Deng were personalists, but Mao's much more disparaging evaluation by Westerners is not buoyed as it is domestically by founding father status.

Kim Il Sung, once underestimated as merely a Soviet communist lackey, may now be credited with the creation of a charismatic dynasty spanning three generations. As the regime of choice to exhibit ongoing totalitarianism, the Kim Dynasty provides the best and most continuous examples of governing leaders' personalist institutional status and posthumous indispensability. How much of this derives from the eldest Kim's “eternal” position as head of state, the omnipresence of his image and quotations, and strict control mechanisms is subject to interpretation, but his institutional status is unquestionable. Any separation of the Kims from the state would require a complete reform or dissolution of the DPRK.

The endurance of Francisco Franco's regime in Spain seems especially troublesome, given the liberal democratic norms thought to prevail in post-WWII Western Europe.¹⁸ While governing from an ideologically diametric distance from Kim Il Sung, his myth of divinity, propensity for building statues of himself, and other factors place him quite close to his Korean “strong man” counterpart on the opposite Eurasian peninsula. Perhaps the nearly complete disowning of Franco as a national institution can be traced in some part to the absence of a large authoritarian patron such as the DPRK has in the PRC. To judge his regime on its own merits, Hodges' biography calls Franco “a sphinx without a secret”, built on a myth of indispensability which was shattered

¹⁷ Similar arguments could be made for the different periods of Park Chung Hee's leadership in Korea: the emphasis on stability and economic growth remained constant, while the “Yushin Constitution” of the ROK's “fourth republic” gave Park the presidency for life and heralded a much more personalist and less liked era. Few would hesitate to call the last decade before Park's assassination despotic, but he wielded near-absolute power throughout his rule. See Kil/Moon for more. Perhaps the institution of the East Asian Model of Economic Development requires this kind of developmental dictator. As democracy fundamentalists, we generally believe that the only truly benevolent dictatorship is that which governs the classroom (and recently even this is uncertain). Even an economic disaster like Mao has his apologists, and even in the contemporary West, as Feigon's book puts aside 30 million peacetime deaths to give credit for rural medicine, education, and women's rights. To an even further, though much less modern extreme, I can personally vouch that a visit to the national museum of Mongolia will enlighten every other country about what a great leader Genghis Khan was, that he remains a national institution even today (perhaps even moreso because he was definitely not a communist).

¹⁸ To branch off of Przeworski's argument that endogenous contexts determine whether institutions are respected or flaunted, while the level of economic development (in which Franco's Spain performed adequately) is widely accepted as one of the most important conditions in this regard, I would add that the presence of a personalistic leader should matter nearly as much as the regime type (economic explanations' primary contender).

even before his long, debilitated decline into political and physical infirmity.¹⁹ Upon his long awaited death, there was little question that Spain would disassociate itself from Franco, but given the resources he expended to embed himself in the public sphere, national reconciliation and the full removal of references to his likeness have continued into the present day. If the Caudillo is still a Spanish national institution, for most citizens he is filed away in the mental equivalent of a dusty attic, akin to where his statues are likely to remain in permanent storage.²⁰

An even more recent and exemplary “strong man” who justified his personalistic rule for the need to bring stability to a divided nation was Saddam Hussein.²¹ Perhaps less bashful about institutionalizing himself, he not only printed his likeness on the national currency but also inscribed the Iraqi flag with his own calligraphy, a rarity even among pre-WWII despots. Despite or perhaps due to great cruelty, how long his regime might have continued if not for U.S. intervention could spark a great deal of speculation. What is likely, however, is that his de-institutionalization after his eventual death would likely have occurred much more slowly, or never at all, without being deposed.

For further evidence of the increasing importance of the international factors described in Solingen’s chapter of *Comparative Politics*, we can turn from past to ongoing attempts by state leaders to institutionalize themselves.²² Muammar Qaddafi’s Libya offers a case in which the state’s highly personalistic leader had been functioning as perhaps its most important institution, but with the current and widely-approved international intervention, the loss of this status is imminent. At most, one may expect his individual institutional legacy to resemble the notoriety of Saddam Hussein as a negative, personalist institution of the past, to which the country must never return.

Despite considerable, perhaps increasing procedural shortcomings, the case of Hugo Chávez as the most important institution in contemporary Venezuela shows that extreme personalism can also exist in democratic countries. After losing a recent referendum on holding the presidency for life, Chávez used the occasion to emphasize his respect for the democratic process, but also asserted that his self-styled “Bolivarian Revolution” would continue.²³ One could debate the extent to which Chávez or any of

¹⁹ Hodges’ epilogue, pg. 257, is a curt assessment of Europe’s #4 dictator, arguably its most exemplary post-WWII personalist: “Despite the grandiloquent rhetoric with which his power was shrouded, Franco’s beliefs had never rested on a rigid philosophy, but were entirely opportunistic, drawing, parasitically, upon the hatreds, fears and hopes of his supporters and his opponents. The linchpin of his regime throughout his time in power was a debilitating terror that any move to dismantle it would result in another civil war. As the fear subsided after his death, so the inflated concepts of both the man and his regime were exposed as fragile figments of his demented imagination.”

²⁰ El País has kept studious accounts of Franco’s falling statues, with the last in Spain coming down in 2008 amid a notable lack of fanfare in Santander: http://www.elpais.com/articulo/espana/Santander/retira/estatua/Franco/elpepuesp/20081218elpepunac_2/Tes. The final still standing in public was in Melilla, Spanish Morocco, coming down the following year. Hamilos’ 2007 article in *The Guardian* tells of the further restrictions on referencing Franco, including an equalizing decree on the Valley of the Fallen.

²¹ It may not only be questioned whether “personalist” is sufficiently condemnatory for Hussein and other leaders who massacred their own citizens, but also whether “despot”, “dictator”, “tyrant”, etc. are sufficiently free of normative judgement to be used by a discipline with scientific pretenses.

²² Her cross-regional analyses offer many insights as to why the global community, i.e. The West, has recently been much less tolerant of cruel, personalistic leaders in the Middle East than Asia.

²³ There is no shortage of invective against Chávez for his personalistic style of governance behind an ostentatious democratic façade. In a chapter called “The Democratic Dictator”, a rather polemic book by Schoen and Rowan disrobes him of the guise and finds an emperor with no

the other populist leaders in the region is respecting democracy or the legal limits of their presidential positions, whether or not they are intentionally elevating their personal status to be the near equivalent of the nation or the state. Less debatable is that they see themselves as representative—if not a singular embodiment—of their indigenous national majorities, backed by mandate from the institution of “the masses” and thereby less restrained. Such genuine support makes Chávez far more likely than Qaddafi to remain an institution of his nation-state after relinquishing political power.

Alternative Explanations and Discussion. This section attempts to tie in several loose ends which might merit further attention. Do the preceding examples of failed posthumous institutionalization simply reflect that the “movements” behind their personalistic ideologies were not able to maintain control of the state? To a considerable extent this is true. In each case, including the case of the PRC which has cast aside virtually everything Mao stood for²⁴, a diehard core remains with the desire to reinstate the principles of the great leader. Such is a challenge to the classification as failure, but it actually supports the overall argument that individuals themselves, separate even from their ideologies, can be macro-level institutions.

Ronald Reagan offers an interesting contrast to the personalist route to institutionalization. While ascribed with much charisma while governing, one would be hard pressed to extend it to a desire to be beatified as a national institution in the same manner as a founding father or third-world dictator. Rather, his status as an institution to be invoked came only after his death, and most formally only in 2008’s Republican presidential primary debates. Reagan does resemble founding fathers in that his name is used to make sure that those who view him as an institution honor his memory and ideological principles, at very least to make sure he doesn’t “roll in his grave”. He has also become an institutional standard for less mortally-challenged contemporaries to measure their conservatism. Finally, his person has been effectively reappropriated as an aspirant, partisan national institution²⁵, quite without his having much say in the matter.

clothes: “Chávez has governed like anything but a democrat. He has moved at every turn to consolidate power into the hands of his own office, remake the other branches of government into rubber stamps responsible solely to him, strip away his rivals’ influence in and out of government, limit freedom of the press, and transform his office into a personal fief with unlimited powers for the length of his life.” While not helpful for my claim of personalistic leadership’s compatibility with democracy, they certainly would agree that he is attempting to institutionalize himself as essential to the functioning of Venezuela.

²⁴ ...save the concept of the Chinese people having “stood up” and the imposing statues of Mao’s own standing, waving figures. Maoism itself has been said to be a far better ideological guide to agrarian rebels in Nepal, India’s Bihar, and parts of SE Asia than contemporary China.

²⁵ Perhaps nothing exemplifies the partisanship of Reagan’s institutionalization as those who advocate placing him on the U.S. dime to remove our embodied institution of left-wing social policies, FDR. One expects the movement will fail at least partially because FDR is an institution which represents not only the welfare state and recovery from the depression, but also American victory in WWII and its continually rising power. Reagan may have single-handedly won the Cold War (see Busch and Spalding and the internet generally for claims which stop just short of this), but a few nit-pickers also point out the legacies of national debt, Iran-Contra, AIDS, etc. Objectively, however, he does seem very close to an institution of the Republican Party. All this rambling hopefully illustrates a process of posthumous institutionalization to the national level and the difficulty of being given that intersubjective status by others: the first step is to establish greatness. For non-founders such as Reagan, the path to institutionalization is undoubtedly steeper, but not insurmountable. After greatness has been established, a transition must occur from “Reagan was a great American” to “Reagan was (quintessentially) American” toward “Reagan was America.” In this sense, as his life and accomplishments are under scrutiny, actually existing leaders stand a better chance at deeper, more meaningful institutionalization than other national symbols such as the fictitious “Uncle Sam”. Similarly, Mao likely resonates more with the Chinese people, though also more normatively, than China’s embodiment as a dragon.

While individuals have definitely shaped institutions, even globally as in the case of Wilson's advocacy of a League of Nations²⁶, only in rare cases does the same individual remain the primary point of reference. This essay wishes to eschew a simplistic "Great Men Narrative" of history, which it and all scholarly fields have consciously disowned in recent decades, yet anything simplified to the willed enactment of an individual's vision allows for the creation of numerous institutions as "national symbols" easily comprehended by the malleable masses. Any political system which depends on mass mobilization for its legitimacy inevitably deals in these national symbols to inspire patriotism and unity. Its greatest leaders, whose sculpted images and numismatic tributes remind us that they too actually walked this earth, are surely more effective motivators than state birds and national anthems alone.²⁷

More sophisticated audiences may also go in the opposite direction. Imprecisely named ideologies such as Marxism and Maoism are often de-personalized as "class-based economic determinism" and an agrarian version of the same. If any personalist movement can be dissected into its smallest, most currently salient components, this poses a serious challenge to the posthumous end of the timeline, but less of one to the living personalist side. The response can only be that the challenge is mostly a matter of semantics, resting on shaky assumptions that only the highest intellectuals control the formation of the truth. It assumes that theories and ideologies must be impersonal to be understood, whether deemed highfalutin or sophisticated by different audiences. In fact, revolutionary motivations need to be punchy, limited in length to the yell-able syllables of a single name.

Is the posthumous half of the individual as institution separable from the concept of a legacy, which all leaders leave behind to a greater or lesser extent? It would initially seem more prudent to argue that individual leaders become inseparable parts of the institutions they create and leave behind. Such would be less difficult and controversial, but it also often fails to connect directly to the individual. Most successful, i.e. effective and enduring, institutions don't immediately conjure their creators, and most people don't know who created most institutions. With more intellectual modesty and honesty, it should be said that nothing of any importance is created by one person alone, and even decidedly non-great or incompetent leaders are only somewhat less apt to create institutions. Richard Nixon is not a permanent fixture of the American political landscape for creating the EPA, and neither would Al Gore's actual creation of the internet elevate him to the level of a state institution. If individuals can achieve such a status, as I have argued, only one's most remembered deeds form a personal institutional legacy, and the greatest of these is the personalistic disregard of all constraints.

²⁶ As previously mentioned, recent events in Latin America have drastically increased the salience of Simón Bolívar as a *regional* institution.

²⁷ Indeed, once someone or something has reached the level of a national symbol, it matters little whether it is a person or an eagle eating a snake on a cactus. National symbols are all institutions, perhaps the least intentional or burdensome way for a person to become one. If states and nations have the power to make anyone/anything into a national symbol, there is *no limit* on the category.

Conclusion. This past spring, Britain and the world's tabloids were enchanted by a wedding in which a princely institutional incarnation of the royal institution entered into the institution of marriage with a non-institution.²⁸ In the long view, personalistic leaders might be seen as merely a continuation of monarchic traditions if not for their prevalence across modernity's many domestic regime types. By illustrating that individual people can sometimes transcend their mundane agency to become structures which guide the governance of the state, this essay has sought to challenge institutions and institutionalism(s) on the grounds that a category which can include *anything* must be a very special category indeed. Opening the door to individual people as institutions would undoubtedly flood the term with infinite new cases and perhaps cause a vital but unwieldy term to finally sink into the sea as a hubristic unit of analysis. By studying everything in the same way, we understand nothing well. Nonetheless, the treatment of personalistic leaders as mere agents has long demanded a correction, which this essay has briefly attempted.

Judging from the lack of scholarly articles in political science on personalism, as well as a shrinking number which address more conventional despotism, it is questionable whether these categories add very much to our understanding of politics.²⁹ More irksome for this essay is the difficulty of prying the two apart from one another, not to mention most of history's wide variety of other authoritarians. Furthermore, when studying national leaders, the analysis bleeds uncomfortably into other disciplines such as history and psychology, whose primitive clinical form is now derided as even less scientifically rigorous than ours. We can take some comfort from the level-of-analysis-busting of Sharrock and Button³⁰ in hopes that studying state leaders will give better insights into our real targets: states and institutions themselves. To claim that the superficial analysis here has accomplished that would be disingenuous. One hopes that the institutional dimension here is both clearer and more consequential.

Frames of analysis which treat the concept of institutions generally tend either to limit themselves to the structural end of the spectrum or exclude people from categorical eligibility while trumpeting autonomous power of certain organizations. The discipline of political science also seems to have an aversion to studying context-dependent examples of institutionalized human agents, including especially the deceased who are no longer able to exhibit any conventional agency yet nonetheless influence national politics from an institutional position. Any definition of institutions which places individuals only in constrained structural relation to them will, in this essay's assessment, trade specious analytical clarity for empirical reality.

²⁸ This is included to acknowledge that an essay such as this may be accused of seeing its unit of analysis everywhere, even reducing the world to a dummy variable of whether or not something/someone is an institution.

²⁹ Carlton's 16 types of despotism may reflect a greater love of categorization itself than of empirical clarity.

³⁰ In Martin & Dennis, pg. 29: "[T]he distinction is not between institutions and individuals but between two ways of studying "institutions". In fact it is the individual/institution contrast that is spurious. The fact that we are studying postal workers does not mean that we are not thereby and simultaneously studying the post office, or vice versa. Individuals are not to be identified independently of their organizational position any more than the organization is to be investigated without reference to what these "individuals" are doing. The emphasis in ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism is on studying institutions-in-action." Again, this essay has proposed to go a step further than this, suggesting that those representing the "institutions-in-action" can in some cases be classified as institutions themselves.

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